

HOUSE RESOLUTION 328

By McMillan

A RESOLUTION to urge the continuation of discussions between staff of the House of Representatives and representatives of Tennessee's cable companies for the purpose of establishing a channel dedicated to governmental affairs.

WHEREAS, In 1998, House staff began formulating plans to broadcast floor sessions of the Tennessee House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, with his opening remarks to the House members of the 101st General Assembly in 1999, Speaker Jimmy Naifeh noted that, in an effort to make the House of Representatives a more people-friendly atmosphere, the opening days of the House sessions were being broadcast outside the chamber to television monitors in the lobby and that he was endeavoring to provide live broadcasts of session through television or the Internet, allowing people across the State to follow their Legislature. This would allow people who are unable to climb the gallery stairs or travel to Nashville access to view the House sessions live; and

WHEREAS, in 2001, the 21st century dawned and the Speaker led the House of Representatives one step closer to his goal. In his opening speech that year he stated: "By the year 2004, it is my goal that virtually every home and school and library in this State will have the ability to access and view the proceedings in this chamber." It was late in the year 2000 that the House of Representatives enlisted Nashville Public Television to assist in the broadcasting of House floor sessions at the beginning of 2001 and continued with this assistance until the House system was fully installed in March of 2001. The House system includes five automated cameras controlled by House staff and allows every House session and joint convention to be broadcast to the televisions in the lobby outside the House chamber; and

WHEREAS, in 2002, moving towards the Speaker's goal of allowing the public to view House sessions over the Internet, House proceedings were broadcast to a handful of news media outlets across the state via the Internet through a video streaming test site. This test site

allowed the editorial staff of several Tennessee newspapers and others to watch debate and the shaping of public policy as it occurred in real time throughout the 2002 House session; and

WHEREAS, when the gavel fell to open the first session of the 103rd General Assembly on January 14, 2003, the Speaker had accomplished his goal a full one year early. The 1st organizational day of the House of Representatives was broadcast live via the Internet to the public through video streaming. The proceedings that day were viewed live by the students of Crestview Middle School in Covington, Central High School in Memphis, and Stratford High School in Nashville; and

WHEREAS, the Speaker, having accomplished this goal, is now focused on a new mission. "My intent is to make our House chamber proceedings, and eventually the proceedings that occur in all House hearing rooms available – gavel to gavel –to anyone who can access the Internet anywhere." In keeping with that mission, on March 11, 2003, the House began broadcasting Finance, Ways, and Means budget hearings over the Internet through video streaming; and

WHEREAS, throughout the 2003 year, 3,987 hits were detected to the House video streaming of floor sessions and budget hearings; and

WHEREAS, in November of 2003, the House provided video streaming of the Governor's budget hearings, which proved very successful with 3,577 hits to those hearings; and

WHEREAS, in 2003, House staff met with representatives of Tennessee cable companies, seeking their cooperation in establishing a cable channel dedicated to Tennessee's governmental affairs. These broadcasts would include neither commercials nor running commentary--simply timely broadcasts of Tennessee's governmental proceedings as they actually happen; and

WHEREAS, in 2003, House staff also met with Public Television officials and with Tennessee government officials, including the Comptroller of the Treasury, the Director of Homeland Security, and the Commissioner of Finance and Administration, seeking their cooperation, knowledge, and expertise in an effort to devise a system to distribute and broadcast Tennessee's governmental affairs; and

WHEREAS, the House of Representatives, under the leadership of the Speaker, is wholly dedicated to providing the citizens of this State with access to its governmental proceedings; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE that this Body urges and encourages the continuation of discussions between the staff of the House of Representatives and representatives of Tennessee's cable companies with respect to the creation of a cable channel dedicated solely to the broadcast of this State's governmental affairs.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that appropriate copies of this resolution be forwarded to all cable television companies in Tennessee.